The Interspecies Newsletter

Summer 1997

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The IC Business Plan

The Interspecies Newsletter is twenty years old. The first issue carried a story about IC's first project, at Iki Island Japan, where fishermen were slaughtering dolphins. This July I return to Iki, to film a Japanese TV network show focusing on a new dolphin-watching program there. How times have changed.

Former IC president, Sandra Wilson, took over the publishing job for a few years, mostly focusing on current projects. I took it over in 1985 and have developed it as a forum about actively relating to animals without sentimentalizing them. I tend to promote aesthetics, Utopian longing, surrealism, co-joined to a skepticism towards the rational. If anyone would like a sampling of old news, send $10 and I'll mail off a random bundle.

I have been thinking a lot lately about how to better describe this organization's actual job in the world. The idea got a nudge when a recent trip to the Sea of Cortez brought me together with a business consultant. I arrived home to a visit from a fundraising consultant. The first consultant encouraged me to write a business plan for IC, telling the true story of the organization's objectives and needs without embellishment. The fundraising consultant stressed that the money to do this unique work will almost always be given by people who appreciate vision much more than they care about the tools and salaries we need to attain the vision. He agreed that I needed a business plan, but cautioned me to use it only as a supportive tool because donors hear the vision best through personal contact.

This newsletter shares with you that completed plan. It stresses philosophy but also includes the tools and budget we need in order to flourish. I have decided to publish it here as part of the general momentum to reinvent IC, specifically to invite a more active involvement from the community that includes IC members, sponsors, media contacts, and colleagues who already support IC in spirit if not in action. If anyone reading this plan has a good idea about how to manifest any of the programs described within, I invite you to contact me. Likewise, if anyone has a new idea that enhances this work, contact me.

The process of writing has taught me that I am committed to IC for the long haul. Without meaning to trumpet my own horn, I believe the world is a better place for the unique vision IC carries. Hopefully this report will motivate some of you to join in to help define the next twenty years of IC's existence.

—Jim Nollman, Friday Harbor, May 1997

Mission Statement

IC was chartered in1978 to research creative solutions leading to a deeper acknowledgment of the place of wild animals in all our lives. IC fosters this bond between species through the use of music, ceremony, publishing, and personal quest. Our projects integrate art with environmental preservation to provide a bridge between often segregated fields of endeavor.

Arts and Science

IC sponsors projects that give artists some of the same access to wilderness and wild animals that our culture usually reserves for field biologists. An artist's relationship to nature is different than a scientists. Biologists operate on the premise of perceiving the world objectively, symbolizing it as numbers and statistics, doing their best to stand outside and separate, peeking in at nature, albeitly observantly, keenly, sincerely, wholeheartedly. But to view nature objectively may void it of subject by diminishing intuition and other forms of direct relating. This perception is often nurtured by our educational system. It oversees most environmental policy.

We offer a different set of perceptions. We interact with animals rather than act upon them, encouraging the bond as a way to achieve a much-needed balance in nature. We relate to habitat as alive; a creative wellspring as much as a place possessed of physical features. We pay close attention to the ancient but largely forgotten premise to esteem mystery rather than always trying to solve it.

Artists in Nature

Several writers have commented that the environmental crisis may be best understood as a crisis in human perception. Likewise, art is a tool that cultures use–and have used throughout history–to transform perceptions. If this makes sense then, clearly, nurturing an aesthetic dimension to our relations with nature is a crucial task.

Contemporary artists need some guidance. During the past few decades, the avant-garde has lost much of the momentum that pushed it forward during the first half of the twentieth century. Insufferable posturing, a gallery system too quick to deconstruct imagination into dollar signs, and aesthetic values that equate what's new with what shocks, has degenerated art into a predictable expression of the personal angst of mostly urban artists. The movement that IC promotes–variously called interspecies music, environmental art, earth art, and vision questing–nudges the momentum in a very different direction. We are leaders of an important trend to relocate the culture's aesthetic center back to the earth

Interspecies Music

IC is best known for its sponsorship of musical communication projects with cetaceans in the wild. Certain species of whales and dolphins clearly communicate with one another through whistles, songs, and echolocation clicks. Even at its most simple, a communication with cetaceans through music develops a call-and-response between species that encourages a sharing of tones and rhythms during a set period of time. As the interaction gets more creative, an ensemble may form based on improvization, a mutual give and take of shared meaning in which both parties understand the common drift.

This can be a profound experience. Musicians who have participated in the IC forum over the years often comment that their own encounter with wild cetaceans has nurtured perceptions and emotions that dramatically altered their usual ideas of relating to animals. It is an experience of learning to operate on animal time, the difference between all that is static and all that is dynamic, between domination and equanimity, the distinction between dissonance and harmony.

The audience can get just as involved in this experience as the players. If the "groove" is happening, an audience simply hears it. People listening to recordings of IC events, whether with orcas, belugas, pilot whales, humpback whales–or even with turkeys–get the chance to make up their own minds if the common ground exists.

Our History

1. The Orca Project:

A twelve year exploration of the musical common ground between orcas and human beings. The project was based in the straits between Vancouver island and the mainland of Canada. To facilitate contact, IC developed a unique sound system, mounted in a boat, to serve as a telephone line to the whales. Over the years, we brought nearly two hundred people from many walks of life into this high profile project. The Orca Project was the subject of several magazine stories, network TV shows and videos. Sponsors of the project included The Threshold Foundation, Rock River, and The Slifka Foundation

2. The Newsletter

Since the start, IC has published a quarterly newsletter that has developed into a classic example of a small publication with a big influence. Articles that first appeared in our newsletter have later turned up in *Orion, Whole Earth Review, NewAge, Omni, Outside, E, Utne Reader*, as well as several book anthologies. Our readership is also our membership. It is small and stable at about 300 mailings, but remarkably diverse, representing nearly every state in the USA, as well as several foreign countries. Membership fees cover the newsletter expense.

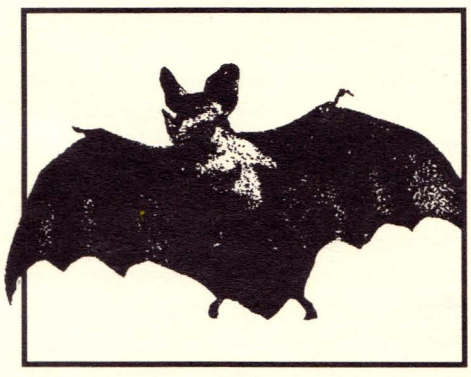
3. Iki Island, Japan

In 1978, IC was hired by Greenpeace to collaborate on one of its earliest projects. During the preceding ten year period, Iki fishermen had slaughtered ten thousand dolphins under the guise of protecting their dwindling fish stocks. This stance was actually a classic case of human over-exploitation of resources with another prey species used as a convenient scapegoat.

IC eventually split from Greenpeace over a strategy difference, but returned to Iki several times funded by, among others, The Animal Welfare Institute and The Wolrd Wildlife Fund. For an entire winter, an IC crew worked directly with the local fishermen's union to test acoustic methods to keep dolphins away from individual fishing boats, and with the mutual goal of ending the slaughter. The team also collaborated closely with the media, providing information at a time when Iki was front page news around the world. Members of the team actively mediated between the Japanese Foreign Ministry and the international environmental community.

4. The Art of the Arctic

Between 1986 and 1993, IC sponsored five major expeditions to various sites in the arctic. The goal was to grant several talented artists an access to beluga whales, gray whales, polar bears, and some of the most remote places on Planet Earth. The result has been documented in two books by participants,



a series of radio shows, pieces by sculptor, Daniel Dancer, in a traveling exposition of earth art, and many news stories related to one specific trip to help save three gray whales stuck in an ice hole near Barrow Alaska. This multi-year project was funded by, among others, The Salisbury Community Foundation, The Dolphin Connection, and The Henry Foundation.

5. Bathing In Music

In 1986, the German Arts Council, in collaboration with IC, presented in Frankfurt a series of underwater concerts involving thirty musicians, dancers, and sculptors interacting with the watery environment of two adjoining swimming pools. Two sell-out crowds of nearly a thousand people per show swam in and around the underwater sculptures to a music that highlighted IC's recordings of orcas. German conceptual artist, Mickey Remann, designed *Bathing in Music* to translate his own experience of interacting with orcas on an IC Project into a context accessible to an urban audience. One concert was carried live over German TV and broadcast to Japan.

6. The Wild Heart

As much as IC sponsors field work, it also nurtures creative ways to bring this work and its underlying philosophy before the general public. With Gigi Coyle in 1987, IC co-hosted a well-received San Francisco gallery showing of artworks created on IC field projects. Collaborating with the German University, ZEGG, in 1995 we co-hosted three week-long whale communication workshops aboard their hundred foot sailboat, *Kairos*.

In 1996, working with performance artist, Christian Swenson, IC executive director Jim Nollman, wrote and produced a presentation about connecting with animals that included live and tape music, dance, theater, slides, and costume. The resultant show, called *The Wild Heart*, subsequently toured Europe, ending with a performance at an international whale conference in Brussels.

Programs In the Works

1. Multimedia Production

The image of a artists interacting with animals is both provocative and dynamic. Over the years, many IC field projects have been filmed for TV and written up for magazines. As might be expected, the products of these collaborations often fail to meet our own aesthetic standards. The result is that, with the notable exception of our current Japanese whale promotion, we have consciously cut back our mass media output over the past few years.

New computer technology has made it conceivable for IC to produce its own professional-quality audio and video, edit the work onsite, add credits and special effects, and even press our own CDs and CD-ROMs. Distribution of these products can be expedited via the internet. IC is active on The Whalewatching Web, the largest site on the net devoted to all things cetacean and which receives up to 10,000 hits a day. Web developer, Daniele Colajacomo, is currently upgrading the Interspecies website to facilitate multimedia presentations, chats, and distribution of cd-roms. Chats, especially, are a splendid tool for developing our community.

IC field projects have always brought artists into nature to produce media on the general theme of connecting with nature. Having control over the production and distribution of this media, suddenly allows us to explore new ways of documenting our projects. We are especially keen to start developing CD-ROMs that pool audio, video, art, writing, and photos to create an interactive document about various IC projects.

This capability is clearly our future. Multimedia productis distributed via the Internet will provide a new base of support for our activities. We anticipate it eventually leading IC to financial self-sufficiency.

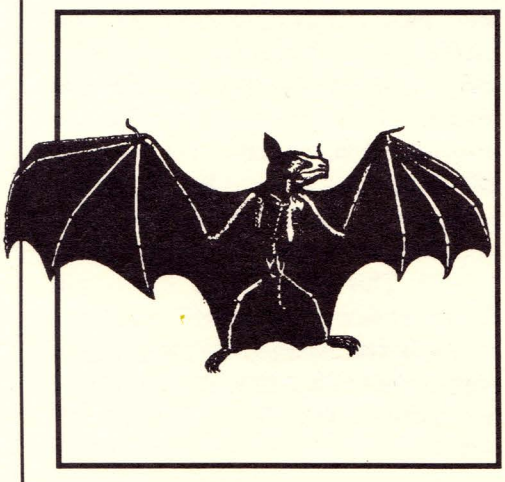
2. Humpback Songs

In the winter, male humpback whales sing their evocative songs as a way to attract females. The best singers–perhaps those who tell the best story, or who embellish the basic melody most creatively–attract the biggest audience. No one knows what they are singing about, although it has been postulated that individual songs bespeak the singer's lineage. In the summer, on the feeding grounds of southeast Alaska, both species sing, but now so loudly and intensely that the song may serve to stun entire schools of herring upon which the whales prey.

Humpback biologist, Roger Payne, compares humpback songs to epic poems, pointing out that each unique song contains distinct rhyming elements. A song may last up to twenty minutes and then get repeated, verbatim.

In 1996, IC set out to explore this non-human musical aesthetic, embarking on a study of humpback songs in collaboration with the field biologists of the Alaska Whale Foundation. By first identifying the humpback singers most curious about human music transmitted into the water, we then design routines that encourage interaction between species.

The next phase of this longterm project begins in September 1997. Utilizing MIDI (computer) equipment that permits sound to be analysed, and humpback songs to be subtly modulated for playback, we plan to spend two weeks attracting a few whales to the AWF research vessel to co-create a music that contains elements of both human and humpback songs. This unique colllaboration of artists, scientists, and whales is permitted by the U.S. Marine Mammal Commission.



3. Japan Trip:

Collaborating with the Japanese whale non-profit, ICERC, IC has co-sponsored five trips to Japan over the past three years. Jim Nollman joined other cetacean advocates including Horace Dobbs, John Lilly, and Paul Spong to tour the country several times, giving presentations, interviews, and demonstrations of communication between species.

Unlike most whale campaigns in Japan involving Westerners, this program does not protest whaling, but focuses entirely on relations with living whales. It is for this reason, that our work is overwhelmingly embraced by mass media within Japan.

The results have been stunning. Whalewatching is sweeping the country. Dolphins have become a dominant image in advertising. In 1996, the team demonstrated interspecies music on a whalewatching boat that had only recently been converted from whaling. The viewing platform was built over a harpoon mount.

In July 1997, Nollman returns to Japan to participate in an NHK TV documentary about a recent change of heart at Iki Island where there is a booming dolphin watch program.

Nollman has recently received an invitation that would allow for an extended stay of six months in Japan with his family, living in a house on the land of a Japanese ecology institute. The two Nollman girls would be home-schooled. To help cover the rent, he will lead workshops based on his books which are published in Japan. This base of operations is just two hours fromTokyo, making it possible for him to continue working intensively on the whale campaign with ICERC and supportive media. As overseas traveler will know, involving a family in a foreign country can open many doors to further this work.

There is no work with cetaceans, anywhere, more important to their welfare than this project of changing perceptions within Japan. Tentative dates are May-October, 1998.

4. Sperm Whale Pilgrimage

The sperm whale may be our greatest animal mystery. Inhabiting the deep ocean, at best we only discern of its behavior what can be gleaned during the five percent of the time it comes to the surface to breathe. We know it dives to 10,000 feet to feed on giant squid, and that males and females travel separately for most of the year in their own pods.

This whale's seventeen pound brain is by far the largest of any creature that has ever inhabited the Earth and, therefore, the largest brain for which we have evidence anywhere in the universe. Given that conclusion, the extent of our own ignorance about this being is amply demonstrated by the fact that, until thirty years ago, humans related to this potential wisdom keeper only as a repository for machine oil.

Recently, we have learned that sperms are unique among cetaceans for clicking back and forth to one another as well as at objects. Because echolocation carries information about shape, dimension, and movement, this communication clearly suggests a language, but one composed of sonic holograms rather than words.

In collaboration with Rock River, aboard the sailing vessel, O'shana, IC plans to spend two weeks offshore of southern Baja California, in spring 1998, at the only in place in North America where sperm whales are known to congregate seasonally. Our intent is to gather together a group of artists and visionaries to meet this whale, to swim with it, and by any of several creative means to simply communicate a hopeful message of coexistence. The IC underwater sound system will be employed as an open line to the sperm whales' environment.

This voyage and this meeting will be filmed, painted, and photographed, the music will be recorded, and the resultant media edited for release in several formats.

1997 budget

Office:		
	1. Telephone, email, fax	$2500
	2. Postage	1000
	3. Quarterly newsletter printing	1600
	4. IC books and tapes to sell	1000
	5. Office supplies	800
	6. Converting our cassette, *Orcas Greatest Hits*, to CD format and pressing 500.	1000
	subtotal:	$7,900
Consulting:		
	1. Exec. Director @ $1500/month	$18000
	2. Accounting stipend @ $150 month	1200
	3. Part time assistant	800
	4. Travel Stipend	2000
	subtotal:	$22,000
1997-98 Field Projects:		
	1. Alaska Humpback Song research (Sept 97)	
	travel	$600
	MIDI equipment[1.]	2500
	contribution to boat expense	400
	2. Sperm Whale Project (April 1998)	
	travel to LaPaz for five	2500
	food, film, audio tape	1200
	boat fee, including gas	1500
	3. Maintenance of underwater sound system	500
	subtotal:	$9,200
Special Projects		
	1. Purchase of computer systems for multimedia and digital audio recording.	$8500
	2. Six month stay in Japan[2.]	
	four plane fares	$4500
	monthly stipend @ $1600/mo.	9600
	10% contingency	1400
	subtotal:	$16,000
	Grand Total:	**$55,100**

1. Includes an in-kind donation by Starrlabs MIDI technology of San Diego.
2. IC seeks a pledge, but will take no money until arrangements are firm on the Japanese end.

Reviews

The Great American Wolf

Bruce Hampton, Henry Holt Co. NYNY, 1997

This is the most thoughtful natural history to appear in print since *Ghost Bears*, which was reviewed in this newsletter a few years ago. I encourage everyone who has ever wondered about wolves, to buy a copy of what amounts to a real-life interspecies thriller. Hopefully it will soon be out in paperback.

Hampton tells his true story about the wolves of North America as a history of interaction between our two species, most of it violent, a lot of it enacted as a personal struggle between individual animals fighting to survive and the rough bounty hunters set out to extinguish them in the same way they extinguished the Indians. The wolves who do survive this holocaust are astonishing for the methodical and very cerebral manner they outwit the bounty hunters.

Much of the book focuses on the recent campaign to bring wolves back to Yellowstone. The various characters representing government bureaucracies and ranch groups who fight every attempt at reintroduction are far less appealing, courageous, compassionate, and even reasonable than the wolves they would keep out. By the end of the book, I wonder how many other readers besides myself will prefer to ban the self-serving ranchers from this range and give it all back to the wolves who will certainly do a better job of stewarding.

...The Cheyenne tell a tale when a large village was attacked by Colorado militia at Sand Creek in November 1864, and over one hundred women and children were slaughtered. Two women and their children managed to escape but soon became lost. Cold and starving, they took refuge in a shallow cave under a bluff. In the middle of the night, the women said a large wolf came into the cave and lay down beside them. At first they were afraid, but in the morning the wolf continued traveling with them, stopping to rest whenever they did. One of the women finally addressed the wolf: "O wolf, try to do something for us. We and our children are nearly starved." The wolf led them to a freshly killed buffalo. Over the next few weeks, the wolf never left their side, always finding food for them when they were hungry. Finally he led them to a Cheyenne camp on the Republican river, and after delivering his charges and receiving food in return, the wolf vanished. pg 41

...The first estimate of the continent's pre-columbian wolf population was made in 1925 by Ernest Thompson Seton who set the number at two million. pg 22

...the fact that both wolves and Paleo-Indians spread more or less concurrently throughout North America, while at the same time pursuing the same prey in the same manner, raises the intriguing notion that imitation may have played a role. Scientists who dispute this possibility insist that no direct proof of such a relationship exists. Nevertheless, surviving oral histories and creation myths of several Native American peoples—Caddo, Ojibwa, Sioux, Tonkawa, and Cheyenne—attribute the wolf with having taught their ancestors how to hunt. pg 24

...By 1918, it was undeniable that wolves were far less numerous than stock owners had claimed. Federal hunters and trappers simply were not finding that many animals, only about 500 or 600 a year, a number that fell to fewer than 100 by the mid-1920's. Bounties, coupled with decades of oppression had nearly eliminated the animals and the federal effort would prove only a denouement to what stock owners themselves had nearly accomplished. pg 136

The Scientist

A Metaphysical Biography by John Lilly Ronin Publishing, Berkeley, CA, 1988

John Lilly is one of the great mythical figures of our time, a metaphor for mind-expansion as much as a person. As in life, this autobiography shows him to be a master of speculation, emerging not so much as a scientist, but as a modern mystic who equates his dreams and his personal revelation as bonafide fact. This, his life story, reads like the quest of a modern warrior-monk who set out to slay the dragon of earthbound intellect as a prelude to attaining the chalice of unbound wisdom. Does he find his chalice? Actually, the answer remains a matter of interpretation, and by the end it doesn't seem very important. Like every other allegory, this story is about the quest, not the goal. It makes a terrific read.

As expected, dolphins play a key role in Lilly's journey, at once messengers, patients, specimen, teachers and slaves. Reading this story one gets a strong sense of the bizarre clinical beginnings that eventually prompted the charged mystique that currently surrounds the dolphin relationship with human beings. Lilly is both sire and patriarch of that paradigm.

...The whaling industry has assured the demise of the older, larger whales who contain the cetacean wisdom of the past and who taught it to the younger cetacea. the obvious conclusion is that the old sperm whales are gone and that with them a good deal of sperm whale knowledge and wisdom has been extinguished. One can assume not only that the older whales educate the younger ones, but there is also interspecies communication in the sea among cetacea. Man has missed the opportunity to share in this ancient culture; the ancient cultures in the new world were eliminated in a similar fashion during the Spanish conquest of Mexico and South America. pg. 204

...I can not convey to you all of the evidence for my feeling that if we are ever to communicate with a non-human species of this planet, the dolphin is probably our best present gamble. In a sense, it is a joke when I fantasy it may best to hurry and finish our work on their brains before one of them learns to speak our language, else he will demand equal rights with men for their brains and lives under our ethical and legal codes. pg 134.

...The "dangers" of brain-voyaging have been hysterically discussed, but not well understood. The perils are not physical.

Whale Vocals

Cornell University Ornithology Lab Bioacoustics Research Program, 1996,

This is a set of seven CDs produced by whale bioacoustician, Christopher Clark at Cornell. These recordings came about because The Soviet Union lost the cold war. Subsequently, in 1992, the US Navy launched a program to restructure their submarine acoustic surveillance network for ocean-wide environmental monitoring of whales in the North Atlantic. The idea of expensive spy gear being used to record whales was great public relations, and the program got a lots of attention.

Unfortunately, these recordings are disappointing. It is perhaps too easy to be impressed by the stats revealing bigger, farther, more powerful: for instance that the sensitivity of hardware was capable of recording blues whales vocalizing a thousand miles from the hydrophones. But at that distance, the distortion is extreme, the deep ocean static is indistinguishable from what sounds like annoying amplifier hiss, and the muffled sounds of hundreds, perhaps thousands of ships passing in the night makes one want to cry for these endangered whales who have certainly lost the ability to hear a mate across the great ocean distances these scientists are able to hear them.

Listening to the actual sounds of blue whales, fins, minkes, and assorted other species mostly reminds me of listening to scratchy old blues songs by Blind Lemon Jefferson recorded in the 1920s. The analogy is fitting. In both cases, incredibly powerful music. Lousy recording.

And despite the hype of this noteworthy collaboration, underwater field recording remains the art form of a few devotees willing to invest about three thousand dollars in a hydrophone, and a DAT machine and then maneuver within a couple of hundred yards of cetacean activity and remain there, anchored, sometimes for weeks on end, until the whales vocalize in an animated fashion.

Good recordings happen when these devotees have to turn *down* their volume, not crank it up. Great recordings happen when a listener can hear the whales but no internal combustion engines wheezing in the background. That's an increasingly rare event these days.

...During the very first hours that the Undersea Surveillance System was used to detect blue whales, more of their sounds were recorded than had ever been described in the entire scientific literature.

...Until the *Whales '93* effort very little was known about the kinds of sounds produced by minke whales...Results from recording minkes on the IUSS have been dramatic and indicate that minkes are acoustically prolific in the deep waters of the southwestern North Atlantic from fall through late spring. Minkes produce distinctive types of sounds that consist of a regular, almost drumbeat pattern of monotonic pulses.

...Listening to the voices of fin whales on this CD will be very different from anything you have ever experienced before. In the deep ocean, where low sounds dominate the acoustic soundscape, the entire texture of sounds gives you the feeling of being wrapped in an enormously soft, slowly undulating quilt.

This Place On Earth

Alan Thein Durning, Sasquatch Books, 1996

The responsibility of creating a sustainable future rests on everyone who live today. It's about choices, some of them intimate, some very public, others abstract and intellectual. They include how many children we decide to have, whether we choose to live in a place where we have to drive to work, whether we prioritize the planet or people when it comes to moral issues like abortion, whether we are willing to trash the dangerous American ideal of doing what we want on OUR land.

Durning's book is the best one yet on the subject. He is a master of using cogent statistics as a tool to make a point. More importantly, he only pulls out his bottomless store of numbers to elucidate what he insists are personal choices, using anecdotes from his own family to show how common choices affect the future. Focusing on building a sustainable society in the Pacific Northwest, this book's message applies as well to people anywhere else, as well as to the future of whales in the deep blue sea.

...The only surefire way of forestalling migration would be to reduce quality of life—or worsen perceptions of it. Indeed, if quality of life fuels migration, then the more successfully the Northwest reconciles community, economy, and ecology, the more attractive it will be to potential migrants. Success at home, in other words, can not be sustained without matching success elsewhere.

...By mid-adolescence, average American young people have spent more time watching television than they have spent with their teachers, friends, or parents. The message they get about sex is "do it, but don't plan it, prepare for it, or talk about it." When teens watch TV, according to the Institute of Medicine, they are exposed to 25 references to sexual acts for each reference to contraception or abstinence. The latter tend to be derogatory; the former, positive.